



# News Release

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## **State to honor outstanding contributions to keeping drinking water safe**

**OLYMPIA** — Keeping drinking water safe is an important and sometimes difficult job. Each year during National Drinking Water Week, the state Department of Health honors the professionals and organizations that have made exceptional contributions to delivering safe, reliable drinking water.

Drinking Water Week will be observed May 1-7 this year.

“Each of this year’s winners has made a big difference for the communities they serve,” said Denise Clifford, director of the agency’s Office of Drinking Water. “Washington has some of the best drinking water in the nation and dedicated people like these help keep it that way.”

Washington’s 2011 honorees are:

### **Cas Hancock, Skagit County – “Lifetime Achievement”**

Kathleen “Cas” Hancock of Concrete, who operates a number of water systems in Skagit and Snohomish counties, is being recognized for her many contributions to the drinking water industry. She is often described as a plain spoken, big-hearted dynamo with a penchant for bringing people together to solve problems. “Is there a small system in Skagit County she hasn’t helped?” the colleagues who nominated Hancock quipped. She has served in a number of leadership capacities, including on the state’s former Water Supply Advisory Committee. The award will be presented at 1 p.m. May 9 at the Skagit County Administrative Building, 1800 Continental Place, Mount Vernon.

### **Town of Endicott, Whitman County – “Most Improved”**

The small town of Endicott, population 289, is being recognized for taking on a big project to ensure safer, more reliable water supplies for the community. They drilled a new well to replace one that had nitrate contamination. The town also increased water storage for fire fighting and fire flow capacity and cut its leakage rate by more than half, from 13.2 percent to 6 percent. The award will be presented at noon on May 5 at Endicott City Hall, 201 C Street, Endicott.

**Mason County Public Utility District #1 (PUD) – “Grace under Pressure”**

In October 2010, *E. coli* was detected in the wells of the Canal Mutual and Minerva Terrace water systems. The contamination resulted from heavy rainfall – 200 percent higher than normal. Both systems are operated by the Mason County PUD. The PUD staff alerted customers with hand-delivered notices, handed out bottled water, and worked with state and county public health for weeks on end to resolve the contamination problems. The award will be presented at 1 p.m. May 10 at the PUD District Office, North 21971 Hwy. 101, Potlatch.

**Lewis County – “Friend of Drinking Water”**

Lewis County is the 2011 “Friend of Drinking Water” for stepping up to manage and operate the city of Vader’s troubled water system. The community could not pay for the needed repairs, and was ineligible for loans. Lewis County was able to secure about \$1.3 million in grants and low-interest loans to pay for repairs. The county also has helped water systems recover from flood damage and other problems. The award will be presented at 10 a.m. May 2 at the Lewis County Courthouse, 351 NW North St., Chehalis.

**Kim Gubbe, Thurston County Public Utility District (PUD) #1 – “Operator of the Year”**

The nomination for Kim Gubbe, operations manager for Thurston County PUD #1, says it all: “Kim is committed to ensuring that all of the PUD’s customers have safe and reliable drinking water and selflessly gives of her own time and resources to support this goal.” Gubbe is the certified operator for more than 100 water systems. The award will be presented at 9 a.m. May 5 at PUD headquarters, 921 Lakeridge Way SW, Olympia.

**City of Walla Walla – “Going Above and Beyond”**

The City of Walla Walla will receive the “Going Above and Beyond” award for its outreach and commitment to inform public opinion about the value its water and sewer infrastructure has to the community. The Public Works Department, under the direction of the City Council, engaged in a multi-year process of study, public meeting and input, and planning. In a very difficult economic environment, Walla Walla received public approval to start an expensive but necessary capital funding program that keeps pace with the cost of replacing its aging infrastructure for the next 70 years. The award will be presented at 7 p.m. May 11 at Walla Walla City Hall, 15 N. Third Ave., Walla Walla.

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